

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC444869
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Responsible individual	Amy Hopkin
Registered manager	Sarah Deaville
Inspector	Louise Whittle

Inspection date	8 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC444869

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people flourish and make significant and sustained progress in all areas of their development.
- Young people form warm and trusting relationships with the dedicated and supportive staff.
- Young people engage in a wide range of fun activities. This supports their physical and emotional well-being and gives them a real sense of achievement.
- The energetic and creative staff team provides each young person with the personalised care to meet his or her complex needs.
- Staff listen to young people, who confidently express their views, wishes and feelings.
- Highly trained and motivated staff constantly apply theory to practice in order to understand the underlying causes of young people's behaviour and respond to them appropriately.
- Staff keep young people exceptionally safe, and work with them to understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Staff are highly trained to recognise and respond to the risks of child sexual exploitation and children who go missing.
- The registered manager is passionate about the service, which she constantly reviews in order to identify areas for development and drive up standards.
- The registered manager expects high standards from her staff and, in turn, provides them with the regular supervision, support and training that they need to fulfil their roles.
- Young people, family members, staff and childcare professionals praise the service.

Full report

Information about this children's home

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10 December 2015	Full	Outstanding
12 March 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12 November 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
<p>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
<p>Young people are very happy here and consider it to be home. They quickly form warm and trusting relationships with staff, and like the reassurance of hugs and cuddles. These highly positive interactions are essential to young people’s emotional and mental well-being. A recent change has involved placing the young people in three groups, each of which has separate accommodation. This has required them to change their bedrooms and the peers with whom they spend most of their free time. The registered manager made these changes in order to address young people’s personal needs, vulnerabilities and staffing requirements. She has allocated each young person to a group based on the level of support and supervision required to meet their needs.</p> <p>Staff consulted young people about the proposed changes and ensured that they prepared them for what was, for some, a challenging move. Staff helped them to adapt quickly to their new rooms and to personalise them with posters and personal items. Young people now have their young people’s meetings and meals in smaller groups.</p> <p>Young people who have plans to move to foster care or independence now enjoy more freedom to choose how they spend their spare time and to develop the social and practical skills that they require to move to less structured environments. They expressed satisfaction with their increased independence.</p> <p>The young people in the other two groups receive higher levels of personal attention and supervision, in keeping with their care and behaviour needs. One young person has already gained in confidence enormously as he now feels accepted by his peer group, and his behaviour has improved accordingly. Young people are already benefiting from the arrangements. A number of young people have forged new friendships, one young person is sleeping better, and they are all making progress in their social skills, and emotional well-being and behaviour.</p> <p>Staff sensitively support young people’s identity via contact, and one young person enjoys both formal and informal contact with his family. This significantly supports his emotional well-being and the quality of his relationships for the future. Staff skilfully undertake life-story work. This also helps young people to understand their family history, and to address anxiety and behaviour issues. Understanding their own and other people’s diversity is an important aspect of young people’s daily lives, and is encouraged through opportunities to talk about what makes them unique. Young people take part in weekly theme nights. These introduce them to</p>	

different ethnic foods and cultural events, which address issues such as disability and religious celebrations. A group of young people recently updated the welcome board in the reception area. This involved them in researching how to say 'welcome' in several different languages. An ethnically diverse staff group also supports young people to feel confident to explore their own heritage.

Young people make exceptional progress in their education, and staff have supported them to take GCSE and SATS tests. Their attendance levels are exceptionally high. Close liaison between care and school staff ensures that they can respond quickly to any issues affecting the ability of a young person to learn, such as their behaviour or emotional state.

Young people have fun doing a wide range of after-school activities, including bowling, horse riding, board games, music and going to the cinema. Some young people particularly like going out for drives and walks with staff, and they can join the rambling and running clubs. They go into the community to take part in Scouts and a stage school group. Young people develop the skills to negotiate and cooperate with each other to ensure that they each have activities that they like. They enthusiastically choose their individual activities on a weekly basis in the young people's meetings.

In addition to weekly activities, they really look forward to going on holiday abroad in small groups with the registered manager and other staff. They also enjoy taking part in their summer show, when they can each perform or contribute backstage, as they wish.

Young people benefit from the highly skilled and perceptive staff who work with them to understand the links between their emotional well-being and their behaviour. One young person has made significant progress in beginning to recognise his own emotions and in developing empathy with others. He is now able to identify the feeling of anxiety, for example, how it affects him and what its causes are. Young people attend therapy on site in the quiet and welcoming therapy room. When peer relationship issues arise, staff creatively engage young people in games that, for example, require cooperation. This can diffuse emotions and teach young people social and negotiation skills while having fun.

The social worker for one young person, who has recently been admitted, commented on how welcoming the other young people were to him and how quickly he made friends. The social worker for another young person said, 'They do fantastic work with young people, stabilising their behaviour and making them feel that they belong. He is making great leaps of achievement in education.'

One parent commented, 'they work very well. He has come on loads and is making good progress in his schooling. We can't ask for anything more. We wouldn't want him to be anywhere else. Contact is at my home for tea once a week and day activities, and staff help with this. If he is out with staff, they pop in for a cup of tea'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
<p>Young people say that they feel very safe, which professionals and family members echo. The home and grounds are well maintained and safe, and the firm boundaries and structure provided by staff give young people a strong sense of security. None of the young people has been subject to child sexual exploitation or has gone missing since the last inspection.</p> <p>Careful matching of young people and staff in the new group living arrangements has already led to a reduction in the severity of incidents and the number of physical interventions. Young people's behaviour has improved and the new arrangements enable the registered manager to place staff where they can manage behaviour effectively. Staff are skilled at diffusing incidents and calming young people down in their own rooms.</p> <p>Staff are highly trained in safeguarding, and are confident in the use of physical intervention as a last resort. They follow clear safeguarding procedures and make appropriate referrals to local authorities when child protection concerns arise. A large percentage of the staff are trained in first aid. All staff receive training to counter child sexual exploitation and children going missing, and some staff are currently engaged in additional training regarding young people who exhibit sexualised behaviour.</p> <p>Close collaboration with therapists supports staff knowledge and practice regarding the reasons behind challenging behaviour. They are, therefore, highly effective in responding to the care and behaviour management needs of each young person, thereby reducing risk. Staff also work closely with childcare professionals and family members to support the safety of young people.</p> <p>Key-work and incident records evidence the extensive range of discussions that staff undertake with young people to help them to understand how to keep themselves safe. These include feelings, behaviour, relationships, self-image and appropriate touch. Staff imaginatively engage young people in these often difficult discussions through the use of photographs, computers, drawings and different scenarios.</p> <p>Staff skilfully work with young people who bully, to understand and address their behaviour. Staff evidence their ability to engage young people in difficult and challenge conversations by ensuring that they follow any incidents of bullying with a reflection session. Work with one young person, during which he drew a chart of feelings, thoughts and actions around bullying, prompted him to consider how it feels to be the person who is bullied. He then realised and accepted that his behaviour to another young person had been bullying.</p>	

Risk assessments, impact assessments and behaviour management plans are thorough, and are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff use a risk assessment precis, which is an information sheet regarding all the young people. This is a valuable tool, providing staff with instant access to information regarding risks, allegations and triggers to behaviours, with strategies for behaviour management. Safeguarding is a set agenda item in supervision, staff meetings and daily staff debriefings.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
<p>The registered manager holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management, and has many years' experience of working with children and young people in residential care. Of the 44 staff members, 21 hold a level 3 qualification and 16 are currently working towards their level 3.</p> <p>Since the last inspection, the highly proactive registered manager identified the need for a change to how she groups the young people together for sleeping, free time, eating and meetings. She recognised that young people with plans for foster placement or independence need time to learn about and adjust to less structured environments. She also acknowledged that, while the boundaries and routines in place provide young people with the stability to learn to manage their emotions and behaviour, they can also limit their ability to think and behave without a high level of support from staff.</p> <p>This creative and dynamic thinking led to the changes which are already proving positive for all of the children. Not only do they provide some young people with less structure, they also enable the registered manager to maximise the benefits to young people of the staff members' skills, strengths and experience. One staff member said, 'The registered manager saw the need to have change and has got on with it straight away. Young people were prepared really well for the change – it was all explained in young people's meetings. All the young people were consulted, and they were asked who they would like to be in a group with. Decisions about young people are made, including young people themselves and all professionals.'</p> <p>The registered manager ensures that the staff receive regular, positive supervision, which provides them with support and makes them reflect on practice. For example, she regularly quizzes staff on policy and procedures. Staff make clear links between theories of attachment and trauma, and practice. They address these on an ongoing basis in team meetings, group reflections and supervision.</p> <p>The registered manager has a development plan for each staff member, which ensures their progress towards achieving level 3 and, for some, being a team</p>	

leader or assessor. The registered manager knows her staff well, and addresses their strengths and areas for development. One staff member has benefited from being placed in a specific group of children to make the most of her strengths. Consequently, she has excelled. Under the registered manager's leadership, the energetic and committed staff work well together to support young people and provide a home that has vibrancy and many opportunities for learning and simulation.

New staff undertake a comprehensive induction programme. This prepares them for their role. In addition to the broad range of training that staff are required to undertake, opportunities are also available to train in diabetes, coeliac disease and cognitive behavioural therapy, for example.

Records are highly organised, and the registered manager reviews the service on an ongoing basis, using a range of management tools to monitor and identify information about staff practice and the progress of each young person.

Care planning is clear, with plans for key work to address each young person's long-term plan, including independence, behaviour, relationships and emotions. The registered manager is highly proactive on behalf of the young people. Since the last inspection, she has positively influenced the local authority to increase family contact for one young person significantly, in order to prepare her and the family for her future independence.

The management team has expanded since the last inspection, with a new deputy manager who will enhance the registered manager's ability to address service developments and provide staff with even more support.

The social worker for one young person stated, 'They do fantastic work with young people, stabilising their behaviour and making them feel that they belong. The service is always evolving and learning – it is very fresh.... they have real commitment to young people.'

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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